

Police Chief's Statement on 8 Can't Wait

In light of national conversations and action around police policies, the Needham Police Department has received many inquiries about the 8 Can't Wait campaign. Many people have asked that we adopt the 8 policies, to "reduce killings by police and save lives." Massachusetts law enforcement agencies have long been ahead of the curve when it comes to the advancement of police procedures designed to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens we protect.

In 2015, the Obama Administration released the final report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, which laid out six pillars for improving communication and relationships between police and the communities they serve.

The Needham Police Department has thoroughly embraced the six pillars embodied in that report, and remains committed to professional conduct, democratic policing, and procedural justice for all people.

Below is how the Needham Police Department currently addresses each of the 8 policies included as part of the 8 Can't Wait Campaign:

1. Ban chokeholds & strangleholds – Needham police do not use chokeholds or strangleholds. These techniques are not part of the defensive tactics curriculum as instructed by the Massachusetts Police Training Council (MPTC) nor are they part of our own Needham Police Defensive Tactic/ Use of Force Training on a yearly basis. These techniques have been specifically addressed in our revised Use of Force Policy effective June 12, 2020 (see link below).
2. Require de-escalation - Officers are required to learn de-escalation during the MPTC recruit academy training program, and further, are required to undergo additional de-escalation training during the annual in-service training programs as required by the MPTC. It is also a critical component to our numerous Departmental Use of Force trainings every year. The use of de-escalation tactics is reinforced in our revised Use of Force Policy effective June 12, 2020.
3. Require warning before shooting - Consistent with the standards set forth in *Graham v. Connor* and *Tennessee v. Garner*, officers may only use that level of force that is objectively reasonable based upon the totality of circumstances. Officers will always attempt to use the lowest level of force in order to effectuate the lawful objective and will attempt to warn individuals prior to using any level of force, provided that they have the time and opportunity to do so. There may be, however, some very limited instances, where it is impossible for officers to provide a warning prior to using force, such as when doing so is necessary to preserve human life.

4. Exhaust all other means before shooting - We have many non-lethal alternatives at the Needham Police Department. Officers will always attempt to use the lowest level of force in order to effectuate the lawful objective and will attempt to warn individuals prior to using any level of force, provided that they have the time and opportunity to do so.
5. Duty to intervene - All officers are trained and required to intervene when they recognize that any other officer or supervisor, of any rank, is acting contrary to the law or policy. Although this has been our policy to date, it has been reinforced in our revised Use of Force Policy effective June 12, 2020.
6. Ban shooting at moving vehicles - Officers are not permitted to shoot at a moving vehicle, except in the very limited circumstances where, consistent with the standard set forth in *Graham v. Connor* and *Tennessee v. Garner*, doing so is required to defend themselves or another when the occupants of the vehicle are employing deadly force, which the officer reasonably perceives as an immediate threat of death or serious physical injury to themselves or another. This includes situations where the vehicle itself is being used as a deadly weapon and the officer is unable to escape the path of travel/ The officer must reasonably believe that they will not endanger innocent persons. It is imperative that officers not position themselves in such a way as to create a likelihood of being struck by an occupied vehicle.
7. Require use of force continuum - Officers are all trained to use only that level of force objectively reasonable based upon the totality of the circumstances. Use of force continuum has been in place for years and is part of recruit training and part of Needham Police and MPTC annual training.
8. Require comprehensive reporting - Officers are required to complete a use of force report for each instance where force is used.

I am proud of the men and women of the Needham Police Department who come to work every day to provide the highest level of police services to all people they encounter. We will continue to act in ways that maintain respect and trust from the community we serve.

Respectfully,
Chief John J. Schlittler